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AUTHOR	Banville, Dominique
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ABSTRACT

This study involved searching all articles published in the last 25 years in both research and professional journals to investigate best practices of cooperating physical education teachers in the United States. The paper focuses on 38 articles related to cooperating teachers and the student teaching experience. Results show that student teachers need to be placed in an environment conducive to their development. They also need the support of cooperating teachers who are knowledgeable about the current curriculum content of physical education, have a good program, and are able to provide appropriate feedback to student teachers through the use of supervisory tools. Good cooperating teachers must also be able to provide student teachers with the emotional support they need. The literature supports the idea of training cooperating teachers as supervisors to provide student teachers with the best support. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the type of curriculum cooperating teachers use in the gymnasium and its impact on student teachers. Also, though many studies mention the importance of using supervisory tools to provide objective data, few discuss how cooperating teachers use this information and its impact on student teacher training. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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LITERATURE REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES OF COOPERATING TEACHERS IN THE USA

Dominique Banville, Ph.D.

Department of Health, Fitness, & Recreation Resources

George Mason University

Fairfax, Virginia, USA

Presentation at the First China-US Conference on Physical Education:

Best Practices in K-12 Physical Education

Contact information:

4400 University Dr., MS 1F6

Fairfax, VA

22030-4444

Tel: 703-993-3579

Fax: 703-993-2126

Email: dbanvill@gmu.edu

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Hello! I would like to start by thanking the organization and the steering committee for their fabulous work. I am truly honored to be part of this conference.

In the United States the student teaching experience "has been regarded historically as the most important experience in the professional preparation of teachers" (Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1988, p.1). During their training, students will likely perform some field experiences, i.e. short visits to assigned schools to observe and, possibly teach. Toward the end of their training, students will student teach in two schools, one elementary and one secondary (if part of a K-12 certification program) for approximately two 6-week periods. Typically, students begin their experience by observing their cooperating teacher, and assisting him/her with routine activities (e.g. attendance, warm-up, distribution of equipment), assuming more responsibilities as time progresses until they take charge of the classes from start to finish.

Colleges and universities that offer teacher-training programs are required to undergo a certification process. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) together with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), reviews teacher training programs every five years. Their evaluation is based on eight standards outlining what a physical education teacher should be able to do. During the review process, an institution must show that their students reached each standard through a variety of activities. For example, Standard 6 relates to planning and instruction and specifies that: "The core of this standard will be a series of

sequential and progressive field experiences that allow preservice teachers, to refine, extend, and apply their teaching skills." (NASPE, 1998, p. 8).

Although cooperating teachers are key players in these field experiences, no standards or official criteria exist to identify those most fitted to welcome and accompany students in that important part of their training. As part of a study focusing on the impact of clinical supervision training for physical education cooperating teachers funded by the Office of the Provost at George Mason University, a review of the literature was performed to identify publications on the topic of student teaching in the last 25 years. The purpose of this presentation is to identify, through the literature, best practices in training and supporting cooperating teachers in their role with student teachers.

Framing the Review

Since the general theme of this conference is Best Practices, I decided to use that expression as my main conductor throughout the review. However, I first needed to define the expression Best Practices. PE Central a popular web site in the physical education field in the United States states that Best Practices are "outstanding things teachers and schools do to motivate youngsters, gain support for their programs, and generally enhance the enjoyment and effectiveness of learning" (PE Central, 2002, p.1). If we transfer this definition to the student teaching context, the definition becomes "outstanding things the various partners in the student teaching experience (i.e., university faculties, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers) do to motivate student teachers, improve their programs (both at the school site and at the university), and generally enhance the enjoyment and effectiveness of learning". This definition will

help determine what has been done thus far to address the various aspects of Best Practices, as well as what still needs to be done and/or researched.

Methodology

Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) argue that "the study of pedagogy requires the study of its empirical, interpretative, and normative dimensions" (p.131). Therefore, all articles published in the last 25 years in both research and professional journals were searched. Using search engines such as ERIC, PsycInfo, Social Sciences Citation Index, and SPORT Discus, published articles focusing on internship, field experience, student-teaching, student-teachers, cooperating teachers, supervision, teacher-training programs in physical education were identified. When using the key words mentioned above, more than 120 articles were found. From these 16 were eliminated because they were not directly related to the student teaching experience itself. Today's presentation will focus on 38 articles related to cooperating teachers and the student teaching experience. I will first introduce articles that look into what happens during the student teaching experience, and then use three subcategories derived from the definition given earlier to share my findings.

What actually happens during supervision?

A study by Tannehill, and Zakrajsek (1988), describes the supervisory behaviors and practices of 18 cooperating teachers in secondary physical education. The results show that minimal feedback was offered, and that they were mainly related to classroom management and instruction planning. When looking into the time CTs spend observing in the classroom, it was found that they follow a general pattern of spending some time in the gym with the ST during the first few weeks and then progressively abandon their

supervision duties in the following weeks. CTs very often are not in the gym at all in the last weeks. As for conferences, i.e., "a sit-down meeting between CT and ST to discuss one or more aspect of the student teaching experience" (p. 9), only 16 conferences were reported, less than one for the entire experience per student teacher. Women CTs (7) conducted 11 of the 16 conferences. The structure of communication was mainly directive, meaning that students receive suggestions on how to improve rather than being questioned about what they did or how they feel they might improve. Considering the results, the authors concluded that the CTs did not fulfill their expected role and that they lacked the analytical skills for expressing feedback in qualitative and evaluative terminology. They also believe that the CTs had inadequate preparation and limited skills in their knowledge of supervising student teachers.

Coulon (1993) reported on data collected regarding the effectiveness of CTs skills in communicating instructions as to what STs must do to successfully cope with specific instructional behaviors. He found that in spite of the fact that CTs had received training in supervisory effectiveness prior to the study on how to provide that kind of information, they were unable to perform as expected. He concluded that comments made by CTs had little impact on the instructional behavior of the ST.

Using the "thinking-out-loud" technique to collect comments made by two CTs when observing their ST, Kahan, in a pilot study published in 1999, reported that contrary to previous research such as the one conducted by Tannehill and Zakrajsek in 1988, the teachers had a great deal to say. The author acknowledged that the data collection method likely encouraged the CTs to be more vocal then normal. While one CT found something positive in nearly everything her ST was doing (60% of her

comments were positive), the other CT was overly critical of her ST (90% of her comments were negative). The reasons behind those negative comments seem to be related to the ST teaching style, which did not mesh with that of the CT's. The CT admitted that she believe that certain factors such as race, gender and age played a part in poisoning the CT-ST relationship. While we need to be careful about making any kind of generalization from these two case studies, the author states that the study indirectly makes a case for more careful pairing of STs and CTs.

The studies give us an idea of what goes on during the supervision of student teachers. Let's now take a look at practices through the eye of best practices. I will begin with the Cooperating Teacher Program.

1) Cooperating Teachers program

Up to now, very few studies have looked into the type of curriculum offered in the schools where student teachers perform their student teaching experience, or the type of improvements CTs make or should make to the curriculum to improve the student teaching experience. Cooperating teachers often determine the curriculum during the experience with or without collaborating with the ST. However, STs prefer to be involved in the curriculum planning. Brunelle, Tousignant, and Pieron (1981) asked STs about critical incidents in which they thought their CT was most crucial in their learning. STs mentioned the freedom to prepare class activities and the ability to pursue their own personal objectives as positive incidents. It was, however, noticed that the CT had to be willing to help them prepare their classes. Darden, Darden, Scott, and Westfall (2001) mention that CTs must be receptive to new ideas and feedback related to their program, and willing to assist the ST in the preparation of lesson plans.

Enhancement of Effectiveness of Learning

The ability to provide student teachers with reliable, objective information that is focused to specific aspects of teaching is considered an important skill in the literature. Articles have been written to provide cooperating teachers and others in charge of student teaching supervision, with tools to work with when supervising such as Metzler's (1981) observational system called "MOST-PE", the ALT-PE (Parker, 1989), the Interaction Analysis System (Cheffers, & Mancini, 1989) or Ocansey's Effective Supervision Guide (1987). More recently, Neide (1996) introduced six tools to be used at different times during the supervision process. Gustafson (1980) mentions that supervision strategies have to be planned carefully, and describes various techniques using a continuum analogy where data-based supervision and subjective supervision can be found. The author suggests using a combination of both types of supervision to provide the student teacher with a varied exposure and make the experience a growing opportunity.

Providing specific feedback is an important feature in the student teaching experience. In studies published by Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1988), and by Brunelle et al. (1981), student teachers mentioned the desire to receive more specific feedback regarding teaching, evaluating pupils, and planning. Brunelle et al. (1988) also mention student teachers willingness to take full responsibility of certain groups of students without having their CT in the gym, and the opportunity to handle difficult situations without the intrusion of their CT as crucial. Also, many STs judged the direct intervention of the CT when the lesson was not going well as ineffective. They finally showed dissatisfaction with the CTs when they were not good role models.

Being a role model is also emphasized by Darden et al. (2001) and by Rikard (1990) who indicate that construct of effective teaching, as those emphasized in the university teacher preparation program, should be shown in CTs' teaching. CTs themselves agree with this concept. Through interviews, Tannehill (1989) found that being a role model was a priority for many cooperating teachers. For other teachers, such as those interviewed by Hynes-Dusel (1999), the fact that they were CTs kept them and their teaching "in line".

Rikard (1990) argues for the clinical supervision approach to student teaching, and proposes the use of clinical supervisors rather than a cooperating teacher and a university supervisor. The clinical supervisors would be cooperating teachers trained in the clinical supervision model. She advocates for this type of supervision, because of benefits such as an increase in the quality of feedback, and a renewed spirit among CTs. She suggests that teachers selected to become clinical faculty should: 1) effectively utilize behaviors presented in the undergraduate methods preparation; 2) understand and support the same constructs of content development taught at the college; and 3) possess supervisory skills. The last characteristic is also mentioned in other articles that I will introduce to you now.

The Impact of Supervisory Training on the Student Teaching Experience

Different models for supervising student teaching have been introduced in the literature thus far (Kean, 1979, Ocansey, 1988, Rikard, 1990, Tannehill & Zakrajsek, 1990). Ocansey (1988) reported the impact of a self instructional package called the Behavioral Model of Supervision (BMS) on four teachers involved in the supervision of student teachers. The analysis of audiotaped supervision sessions showed that CTs were

providing effective post-teaching conferences, and an increase in the time they spent on micro-incidents and planning incidents as well as a decrease in the time spent on unrelated incidents and macro incidents.

In a follow-up study on what was happening in the supervision of STs in secondary physical education, Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1990) conducted a study to assess the impact of a self-directed training program on the supervisory practices of five trained CTs when compared to seven untrained CTs. Through the STs daily logs, weekly reports, and the analysis of weekly supervision conferences, the authors conclude that CTs using a supervisory training manual provided more frequent and more substantive feedback than untrained CTs.

Cooperating Teachers themselves report the importance of being trained as supervisors. In a study published by Rikard and Veal (1996), 21 of the 23 CTs interviewed indicated receiving no preparation by universities with whom they worked. To compensate, they tried to remember their own student teaching experience, model the principal's way of supervising them, or simply relied on their own experience as teachers. A few teachers reported learning about supervision from watching other teachers supervise and university supervisors.

3) Cooperating Teacher – Student Teacher Relationship

The Best Practice definition in student teaching mentions the importance of motivating student teachers and the enjoyment of learning. Shempp (1988) highlights the importance of creating an atmosphere that is accepting, positive, and encourages experimentation and analysis. He emphasizes that STs should not be expected to master all learning skills but rather expect students to understand the teaching skills and work

toward improving those skills. Darden and his colleagues (2001) also emphasize a positive atmosphere in which CTs encourage communication so STs feel comfortable asking questions.

When asked, cooperating teachers talk about the importance of serving as a sounding board, being a resource for the exchange of ideas (Tannehill, 1989), possessing personal qualities such as patience and calmness, and helping the student teacher feel comfortable in the school setting in order to motivate them to enter the teaching profession (Rikard & Veal, 1996). Finally, in the study performed by Tanehill and Zakrajsek (1988), STs specified that they appreciated receiving praise or positive reinforcement about their teaching.

Schilling (1998) suggests an approach that complements other supervisory practices by addressing more thoroughly student teachers' needs. This "Invitational approach" focuses on using the various strengths of STs by helping them recognize their own value. Focusing on the positive helps, according to the author, alleviate some of the stress that comes naturally with the student teaching experience.

Overview of what we know and what we still need to look into

Reviewing the literature provides a useful insight of what has been written thus far on the topic of best practices in student teaching. We know that student teachers need to be placed in an environment conducive for their development, need the support of a cooperating teacher who is knowledgeable about the current curriculum content of physical education, has a good program, and is able to provide appropriate feedback to the student teacher through the use of supervisory tools. They must also be able to provide STs with the emotional support they need. The literature also supports the idea

of training cooperating teachers as supervisors to provide student teachers with the best support.

Using the "Best Practice" definition helps determine what still needs to be researched and improved. A lack of knowledge exists regarding the type of curriculum cooperating teachers use in the gymnasium and its impact on student teachers. Also, many studies mention the importance of CTs using supervisory tools to provide objective data. Very little is stated about how CTs use this information and, again, its impact on student teachers training.

One last bit of research related to the cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship that I believe is worth pursuing as suggested by Kahan (1999), is the pairing of ST and CT. Criteria such as the CTs and STs values, learning styles, teaching styles and supervisory styles could be used to study the efficacy of pairing. Work on the topic by Coulon and Kahan is currently in progress in the United States, but more still needs to be done. Thank you

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